

Year of the Tiger Celebrated in 2010

In 2010 the U.S. Postal Service will issue its Year of the Tiger stamp, the third of twelve stamps in its Celebrating Lunar New Year series, which began in 2008 with the Year of the Rat. The Year of the Tiger begins on February 14, 2010¹, and ends on February 2, 2011. The tiger (which is illustrated in the upper left of the stamp) is the third of twelve animals associated with the Chinese lunar calendar. According to a legend, the animals raced across a river to determine their order in the cycle. The rat crossed by riding on the back of the ox, jumping ahead at the last minute to win the race. The tiger came in after the ox.

People born in the year of a particular animal are said to share characteristics with that animal. Individuals born during the Year of the Tiger are said to be courageous and to possess hidden reserves of strength. They are also thought of as candid yet mysterious. Famous people born in the Year of the Tiger include Marilyn Monroe, Stevie Wonder, and Tom Cruise.

The Lunar New Year is celebrated primarily by people of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tibetan, and Mongolian heritage in many parts of the world. Parades, parties, and other special events are common. Images associated with some of these widespread customs are depicted in the Celebrating Lunar New Year series.



In the United States as elsewhere, the occasion is marked in various ways across many cultures. Narcissus flowers, such as those depicted in the stamp art, are considered auspicious at any time of year and thus are appropriate at this time of renewed hope for the future. Firecrackers are used to scare off evil spirits and welcome the new year. Lucky foods

are eaten—pork sausage with cabbage is one example—and dancers wearing lion heads made of papier-mâché and bamboo perform for delighted crowds. Festive lanterns colored red, for luck, are common decorations at such celebrations, where they are frequently hung in rows.

The U.S. Postal Service introduced its first 12-stamp series of Lunar New Year stamps in 1992. The new series, Celebrating Lunar New Year, will continue through 2019 with stamps for the Year of the Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Ram, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Boar.

1. The beginning date of the Lunar New Year in 2010 has been verified as February 14. Some Internet sources give February 10, 2010, as the first day of Year of the Tiger. This alternative date may have been arrived at using a variable formula—some observers reckon the animal year based on solar months rather than lunar months—but most authoritative sources give the date as February 14.